

The Izaar (Lower Garment)

Kamil Mufti

Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri relates the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said,

"The izaar (lower garment) of a Muslim is to the middle of the shin and there is no sin if it comes halfway between that and his ankles, but what comes lower than the ankles is in the Hell-Fire. On the Day of Resurrection Allaah will not look at a man who drags his izaar out of arrogance." ¹

Izaar is defined in Arabic to be any lower garment tied to the waist covering the lower half of the body. It includes shalwar, pants, dhooti, pajamas, thawb, etc. In this hadith the Prophet divided the length of the izar into four categories:

- (1) the Sunnah is upto half of the shins.
- (2) the rukhsa (concession) is below half the shins till the ankles.
- (3) the haram and a kabira sin is letting it go below the ankles without arrogance since the Prophet mentioned its punishment ("...is in the Fire").
- (4) even stronger in prohibition and punishment is dragging or trailing below the ankles out of arrogance. ("...Allaah will not look at a man...").

Whether the izaar goes below the ankles out of arrogance or without it is a kabira (major) sin according to the majority of scholars based on this and other explicit hadith of the Prophet. Note the Prophet mentioned different punishments when it is done with and without arrogance. This is further confirmed by two other hadith reported by Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurairah:

"Allaah will not look at a man on the Day of Judgment who drags his izaar out of arrogance."

"Whatever is below the ankles will be in the Hell-Fire."

In both these hadith the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) made a distinction between the izaar going below the ankles out of arrogance and without arrogance by mentioning different punishments. The scholars also mention the following hadith of Abu Jurayy Jabir bin Sulaim who was instructed by the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam):

"Have your izaar halfway down to your shin, if you can not do it, have it upto the ankles. Beware of hanging down the izaar for it is makheela (arrogance), and Allaah does not like arrogance." ²

In this authentic hadith the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) made a clear order to Jaabir to keep his izaar above his ankles, and as Allama Shams al-Haqq al-Adheemabaadi writes in al-'Own al-Ma'bud that dragging one's garment below the ankles intentionally is makheela (arrogance). One may understand it in this way: If a person buys his own clothes and chooses garments that hang below the ankle, that means he chooses to disregard the Prophet's (sallallaahu alayhi wa

¹ Abu Daud, al-Nawawi declared it sahih

² Abu Daud, Tirmidhi who declared it hasan-sahih

sallam) instructions due to his preference. That is makheela. Abu Umama relates that 'Amr bin Zurara al-Ansari entered a gathering (majlis) with his izaar going down below his ankles...

"the Prophet held him by the side of his clothes and said with full humility of Allaah ("wa yatawadih lillahi azz-o-jall"), 'I am Your slave, son of Your slave, and son of Your female slave' (for having seen an act of sinfulness), till 'Amr heard it and said apologetically, 'O Messenger of Allaah, I have very skinny shins. The Prophet replied, 'O 'Amr certainly Allaah has perfected everything he created, verily Allaah does not love a person who drags his garment below his ankles.' ³

This is another explicit hadith that letting the izaar go below the ankles without arrogance and perhaps even with some excuse like having skinny shins is forbidden as the Prophet told 'Amr that Allaah does not love such a person.

A man was praying with his izaar hanging down. The Messenger of Allaah said to him, "Go and perform wudu'." He went and performed wudu'. He came back and the Prophet said, "Go and perform wudu'." A man asked, "O Messenger of Allaah, what is the matter with you that you commanded him to perform wudu' and then you kept silent?" He replied, "He was praying while hanging down his izaar, and Allaah does not accept the prayer of a man who hangs down his izaar." ⁴

The purpose of the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) making him perform wudu' as explained by the 'ulama was to remind him trailing his izaar down was a sin and to purify him of that sin, not because it broke his wudu'.

The following two incidents should settle out hearts on this issue.

(a) 'Ubaid bin Khalid reports, "Once I was going somewhere in Madina, I heard a person behind me saying, 'Raise your izaar because it is more fearful of Allaah ("...fa innahu 'atqaa"). I said, 'O Messenger of Allaah, it is only a chequered coverlet (i.e. what pride can one take in it?!)" He responded, 'At least it conforms with my uswaa (example).' I saw him, his izaar was half way to his shin. ⁵

(b) 'Umar was stabbed while he was leading the prayer. He was the Ameer al-Mu'mineen, the Muslims were worried about him and who would be his successor. A young man came to his death-bed to show his compassion and praise his caliphate. 'Umar saw the young man's izaar going below his ankles to the ground, 'Umar called him and said "O nephew, raise your izaar, it will be cleaner for your clothing and more fearful of your Lord." ⁶

Ibn Abi Sahaiba reports with a sound chain that 'Umar's son - Abdullaah - would say about this incident: "'Umar's affair was really amazing! Once he saw Allaah's right on him to order the right and forbid the wrong, his situation did not stop him from saying it."

Lastly, let us discuss two common misunderstandings. First is a rational argument that it was a custom of pagan Arabs in those days to let the garment hang below the ankles as a symbol of pride. Hence, it was discouraged by the Prophet. Since nowadays it is no longer considered to be a symbol of pride, there

³ Tabarani, sahih according to Shawkani

⁴ Abu Daud, Nisai, Tabarani. Nawawi declared its isnad to be sahih on the conditions of Imam Muslim and Dhahabi agreed with him in his "al-Kaba-ir." Shams al-Haqq al-Adeemabadi declared it to be hasan

⁵ Tirmidhi in his 'al-Shamail al-Muhammadiyah

⁶ Saheeh Al-Bukhaaree

is no harm in doing so. The response to this is: there is no shred of evidence that suggests that it was a custom among pagan Arabs to hang their izaar below their ankles to indicate pride. There is no hadith, no statement of the earlier scholars, or any piece of jahili poetry that we know of to indicate that. This is nothing but mere conjecture. On the contrary, reading the statements of the muhadditheen who have commented on these hadith indicate otherwise.

Secondly, an oft-misunderstood hadith is quoted:

"The one who drags his garment out of arrogance, Allaah will not look at him on the Day of Judgment." On hearing this Abu Bakr said, "O Messenger of Allaah, my izaar falls down unless I take extreme care of it." The Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said, "You are not of those who do it out of arrogance."

Based on this hadith some people think it is permissible to extend their izaar below their ankles as long as it is not done as a sign of arrogance. Such an understanding is not correct due to the following reasons:

- (1) This incident shows that Abu Bakr had heard the Prophet instruct them about their izaar earlier. Now, evidently Abu Bakr did not gather from those earlier statements that he was allowed to let his izaar hang down if done without arrogance, that is why he would keep his izaar above his ankles, but since doing so continuously became hard for him, he inquired the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) about his special case. In other words, nothing in the earlier statements of the Prophet indicated to Abu Bakr that he was allowed to let his izaar hang down, rather he would wear it above his ankles or else why would he ask the question?
- (2) The reason his izaar would slip down was because he was thin (as mentioned by Hafidh Ibn Hajr in al-Fath).
- (3) The Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) did not tell him or anyone else at any point, "...it is permissible to wear the izaar below the ankles if it not done out of arrogance."
- (4) Not only that, but at no point did the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) himself wear his izaar below his ankles to at least show its permissibility. Now, everyone agrees that the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) was free of any sort of arrogance, yet he himself was never seen with his izaar below his ankles! If letting it down without arrogance were allowed, the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) would have done it because he was more free of pride than any human being to walk on this earth! On the contrary, the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) would wear his izaar above his ankle, and repeatedly encourage the Sahabah to do so by mentioning the punishment as well as ordering them to do so at different occasions.
- (5) All the Prophet told Abu Bakr was that he is not an arrogant person and his izaar going down was not done out of arrogance. At no point before this incident did Abu Bakr claim freedom from arrogance even though the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) testified to it. How can someone else not testified to by the Prophet claim it for themselves?
- (6) The explicit meaning ('ibarah al-nass) of the authentic hadith that mention different punishments when it is done with and without arrogance take precedence over and are stronger in their dalala (textual implication) than the alluded meaning (isharah al-nass) of this hadith which is perhaps why it never occurred to Abu Bakr or any other Sahabi to let it hang down.

(7) There is no evidence that Abu Bakr would hang his izaar down from that time onward. Not only him, we do not know of any Sahabi doing so. On the contrary, the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) instructed several Sahabah to wear their izaar above their ankles and we do not know of a single Sahabi who claimed freedom from arrogance for themselves and wore it below their ankles. Quite the contrary, the practice of the Sahabah can be seen in the incident of 'Umar and in Abu Ishaq's report as collected by Tabarani,

I saw Usamah, Zayd bin Arqam, al-Bara bin 'Azib, and Ibn 'Umar, all wearing their izaars to the middle of their shins."

Now if those people "who do not hang it down out of arrogance" does not include the Messenger of Allaah, Abu Bakr, Umar, and many other Sahaba, can it possibly be people of less piety who were born centuries after them?

Whoever thinks so is deluded.